



MINUTES OF THE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY 7 MAY 2020

1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th February and matters arising

Cllr. Lacey commented that he had received some negatives comments from fellow Councillors regarding the new furniture and setup in the Supper Room. The Manager informed Members that some of the furniture was temporary as there had been a delay with the delivery of the original pieces.

It was agreed that Members would consult with their groups following the installation of the permanent furniture and would revert back to this committee with their comments.

Order: Minutes Agreed

2 Covid-19 Protocol Guidelines for Remote Meetings and Video Conferencing

The Members were broadly supportive of the guidelines and the following issues were discussed:

- Why was Microsoft Teams recommended as the preferred platform rather than Zoom which appeared more user friendly?
- Councillor MacDonncha recommended that all Councillors be assisted in downloading the Teams software to their laptops and iPads and be provided with a tutorial on logging into a meeting and using the platform.
- The Members agreed with Cllr. O'Muirí's suggestion that the guidelines be amended to include a recommendation that the minutes of video conferenced meetings should be recorded in the same way as physical meetings and that they be published in similar fashion.

The Manager reported that the IS Department had advised on using Microsoft Teams platform as it was the most secure. Furthermore, all Councillors had been setup with a Teams account and would be assisted in downloading and using the software. The Manager confirmed that any Committee could meet online provided they were not making legally binding or statutory decisions.

Order: The guidelines as amended were approved.

3 **Consideration of alternate locations to host Area, SPC and City Council meetings over the next 12 months as the Council Chamber is too small to facilitate social distanced meetings. Possibilities include the Rotunda, the Round Room and the Conference Centre.**

The Manager informed the Committee that the Council Chamber can accommodate meetings of up to 15 Councillors while adhering to social distancing protocols. This means that the full Council, North Central and South East Area's and all Strategic Policy Committees must identify alternate locations to host their meetings.

There was a general consensus among Members that in the first instance alternate meeting venues should be sourced from existing Dublin City Council premises in order to reduce additional costs. For full Council meetings consideration should be given to venues such as the Round Room at the Mansion House and the Rotunda in City Hall. Sports and community centres also be considered for Area Committee meetings.

The Manager reported that Dublin Castle can be used to facilitate a socially distanced full Annual meeting in June and the monthly meeting in July. They also have translation booths which can be used as isolation pods for those Councillors who have vulnerable family members. However, Councillors cannot remotely attend the full City Council meeting. They must be physically present to participate in the meeting. The use of other City Council venues will be investigated although consideration must be given to factors such as the facility to webcast, the cost of hiring audio equipment and the capacity to enforce adequate social distancing.

4 **Identification of additional equipment/ resources/guidelines to more easily and efficiently facilitate remote working by Councillors**

In general the Members were satisfied with the existing levels of IT equipment. In addition Cllr. K. Connolly suggested the provision of audio headsets with inbuilt microphones would be beneficial for conducting video conferencing.

The Manager reported that additional laptops for Councillors had been ordered although there have been delays in delivery due to excess demand. She agreed to the provision of headsets for Councillors on request.

5 **Development of an online Councillor resource hub for ease of access to SPC papers; Area Committee presentations; Council updates; Motions; responses to queries where the response has relevance to an entire LEA and/or the city; events etc.**

The Members expressed interest in the development of this idea. However, Cllr. Pidgeon pointed out that the existing Moder.Gov platform currently provides many of the functions outlined in the proposal and he would be wary that a new system would cause confusion and undermine the existing application which is working well.

This proposal was put forward by Cllr. Feeney. Unfortunately Cllr. Feeney was unable to participate in the meeting due to technical issues so it was agreed that any further discussion on the item should be deferred to the next meeting.

6 **Transition to Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC) from Pension Related Deduction (PRD) in the Public Service on 1 January 2019**

The Manager briefed the Members on the implications of the new regulations and explained that the Additional Superannuation Contribution is applicable to Councillors as they are entitled to an ex-gratia retirement gratuity. It will also be relevant to any Councillor who has alternative employment in the public sector. All Members must make the return and there may be a liability dating back to the introduction of the scheme in 2019.

Order: Noted

7 **Europe Day Declaration of Renew Europe Mayors and Regional Ministers**

The Members agreed that the Lord Mayor could exercise authority to sign the Declaration if he so wished but he would do so as Lord Mayor not necessarily on behalf of and with the endorsement of the City Council. Various Councillors expressed reservations about certain aspects of the Declaration but they were not going to prevent the Lord Mayor from signing it if he so wished.

Order: Agreed

8 **Managers Report**

The Manager reported that City Hall would be open to Councillors from 18th May to access their Group Rooms and to use the facilities. Entry into the building can be arranged by contacting the Manager directly.

9 **A.O.B**

- Cllr. Lacey requested that the administrators of the Strategic Policy Committee's make contact with the non-Councillor members of the SPC's to update them on the current situation and to outline plans for resuming remote meetings from June onwards.

Order: Agreed

- The Manager informed Members of the news that Ray Glynn had suffered bereavement through the loss of his sister and aunt during the Covid 19 Pandemic. The Members wished to extend their condolences to Ray on his loss.

Order: Noted

- Cllr. Cooney expressed dissatisfaction on the lack of consultation with Councillors on the issuing of press releases especially with regards the decision to reserve City Council Parks for specific times for the vulnerable and elderly. She requested that in future there is a greater degree of communication with the elected members on issues such as this.

Order: Noted

10 **Date of Next Meeting:**

To be confirmed.

Councillor Deirdre Heney
Chairperson
Thursday 7 May 2020

Attendance:

Members:

Deirdre Heney (Chairperson)
Donna Cooney
Mannix Flynn
Briega MacOscar
Noeleen Reilly

Officers

Ruth Dowling

Members:

Joe Costello
Dermot Lacey
Naoise O'Muirí

Michael Gallagher

Members:

Daithí Doolan
Micheal Mac Donncha
Michael Pidgeon

Deirdre Ni Raghallaigh